

Hispanic Language Heritage: Language Assets for Career Preparedness

Host: Welcome to this podcast, hosted by the U.S Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, OELA. We're here with Lorena McElwain, Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director at OELA. Joining Lorena for this discussion on language assets for career preparedness, are Carol Carter, the founder of GlobalMindED, Oscar Freire, a student at Colorado University in Denver, majoring in Business Management Information Systems, Dr. Patty Lopez, a Senior Platform Applications Engineer at Intel Corporation, Adrian Rosado, president and founder of Cultural Clarity Experience, and Feli Sola-Carter, an executive coach at Excellence in Government program.

Multilingualism opens career opportunities in the public and private sectors and can raise occupational status and earning potential of individuals who are proficient in more than one language. Language skills can also serve as an important resource for learning and development of problem-solving competencies. The purpose of today's podcast is to inspire a linguistically and culturally diverse students to cherish, nurture, and previewer their primary culture, heritage and language, so they can realize the short and long term personal, educational and professional benefits of being multilingual. Our panelists will discuss how multilingualism can shape career paths and share how language skills have influenced their career trajectories. Let's get the conversation started.

Lorena: Today's seminar is very, very important to me personally. I am committed to promoting retention of heritage languages. This is very important not just for a number of reasons, cognitive, behavioral, social, cultural, economic, but also because speaking more than one language opens doors to interesting careers and that's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to talk about language as an asset that opens doors to professional opportunities. Carol Carter will be leading us in this discussion, and I am very excited because Carol is an awesome lady. She is an international student success author, speaker, entrepreneur, and founder of GlobalMindED.

She began her career in college publishing with Prentice Hall, where she became the first female assistant VP and director of college marketing at age 26. As VPM publisher, she developed keys to success. This is a tool that helps students connect academic success to professional success, and more than 3 million students worldwide have received this tool in multiple languages. As you can see, Carol shares our passion for academic success, and I thank her for bringing her experience to today's dialogue. Again, we are going to be discussing how bilingual and multilingual skills are an important asset that can be leveraged in a variety of professional and career opportunities.

Carol: Thank you so much, Lorena. And welcome, everybody. We're delighted that you could join us for this afternoon session, and really honor and celebrate Hispanic Heritage with some of the luminaries of Latino leadership within the GlobalMindED community. And those are the people that we have today. So, you're in for a real treat. I want to just say that the people who we gathered today represent different ages and stages of career life where they can speak to the advantage of the bilingual skills, the multicultural skills. And we thought it would be interesting to frame our discussion today in the reality of what's happening right now in the world as we are experiencing it.

So, from 2018 to 2028, the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, the BLS, projects the number of Hispanics in the labor force to increase by about 7.4 million more than any other age, sex or

race or ethnic group. BLS projects total growth in the labor force to reach about 8.9 million people over the decade. And one of the things that we do know is that Latinos, like other people of color, have been hardest hit by the nation's COVID related economic crisis and 17.6% of Latinos have been unemployed through this.

So, one of the things we realize is that as hard as some of this has been recently, since March, on the Latino population, the people who you're going to meet today are some of the most amazing people, all of whom are first-generational college, all of whom have overcome multiple obstacles in their lives, to be the successful people that they are today. So, we think it's so important at a time like this to really hold up and have role models for people who have done really difficult things, because this is a time in our nation's history where all of us are learning to do new things that are difficult, and that's going to make us really strong for some incredible things in the future.

So, we're going to go ahead and get started. And I will just briefly share for those of you who've never heard of GlobalMindED, so you understand why we're working with Lorena and OELA and her colleagues there. GlobalMindED is about creating a capable, diverse talent pipeline to get more women, people of color, underrepresented populations into the education, economic mobility, employment, and leadership pipeline. So, we have been around for six years, and many of the people who are involved today are part of our leadership. So, it's going to be really fun to spend the hour with each of them.

And we're going to start off with one of our students, who is Oscar Freire. He's a student at CU Denver. And he just participated in the GlobalMindED student leadership first-gen program this summer. And he was part of a report called Student Speak. So, we're going to go right to Oscar. And Oscar, we'd love for you to share with us your perspective on, how language has created your gifts, your talents at this moment in time, and the way in which even participated in the Student Speak program that you were a part of. How does that give you, as the Latino leader that you are, the voice at your university, in your state, and throughout the nation and the world? Oscar, welcome.

Oscar: Thank you, Carol. Yes, I would definitely say that language has made me who I am, being bilingual and fluent in Spanish and English. So, I have a unique experience of being born in Colorado. But spending my early years in Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, I believe it was about two weeks. So, I had such a privilege to experience my primary culture up and close. And it wasn't clear to me back then, the opportunity was for me to learn Spanish as my first language as...you know, when I came to the States, I saw a lot of people actually losing their language through generations. So, you know, at the time of me transitioning into American culture, which was about third grade, it was difficult at that point, and I was like, "Oh, you know, I will never learn English."

You know, young kids would make fun of me, I couldn't make conversations. And at that point, it didn't seem like a great opportunity. But as I started growing up, and just the experience that my parents were able to give me through their sacrifices, they chose to essentially be different than their family and peers, which they were comfortable with their kids having an okay life, but my parents always had the entrepreneurial spirit of really using all the resources they were given, even if they were limited to provide the best for my sisters and I, and I am the middle child. So, in 2006, I made that transition, and we left everything in Mexico. And ever since that transition at that point, I didn't really know how important my language is and how much of an asset it is.

But now, I've gotten to really use my language as a tool to provide for my community, for example, my parents, they pretty much said, "Hey, we got you here and, you know, you're on your own." And I think, you know, I had that spirit of, I have to just do what it takes to get to higher education. And I essentially found a way through community college and really just beat the statistics of, you know, college being really expensive by simply finding scholarships and really committing to my goal of being debt free through my college experience.

And my parents just set me up and they gave me all possible but I did essentially have to build my own blueprint that I would want to share with my younger sister, and then that tied into younger generations that...I know there's people out there that, you know, college might seem impossible for them. It's too expensive. Oh, no one in your family has done it. And I think that's a huge impact. And even going back to that report that you mentioned, Carol, it was very interesting to see how similar the problems of first-generation students are, is essentially not having that go-to person of simply asking, "Hey, is my schedule in the right order?" "Hey, I'm having difficulties." It's really having to figure it out on your own.

So, I believe that language really just gave me that responsibility later on in life to really pay it back and share that knowledge that I was able to gain through enduring, you know, the obstacles and challenges that I was faced. And I fortunately got to the other side of, now I'm a senior double majoring in Business Management with the focus in information systems with intrapreneurship. And being the first one to ever really do something this way, and my younger sister following those steps, and I've also just really seen how...language really opens the door to business and socio-economic advancement in the sense of just recognizing the key factors such as, you know, having the right bank account, having, like, financial freedom, essentially.

And I think that is something that we as the Linux community and just minorities in general, there's really that lack of exposure of, "Hey, it is a process, but it's not as hard if someone exposes to you." And I definitely think that language has made me who I am. And I would definitely, you know, encourage anyone that, you know, you have heritage within the whatever community you belong to like to really get in touch with your roots. And I think it's very important to, again, not be ashamed, but embrace it.

And once you embrace it, like myself, like, I've gotten myself to get opportunities, and not only opportunities, but to build meaningful relationships with a lot of individuals that...again, we all are going through the same thing, essentially, but just through a different lens. So, I would definitely say that language is who you are, language gives you a voice to impact your community, and language opens the door for economic advancement.

Carol: Muy bien dicho. I just want to say and just acknowledge that your strength and all the things that you've gathered through the different things that you've been through in your life so far, just make you have that super strong, indomitable spirit. And that was...it comes through and spades with you. And it was just so wonderful to see that among your class of those 102 students that you guys all have that in common, even though you're from all over the place. So, just great job. And we're so glad that you're at the table with us today. And I'm looking forward to getting you at more and more tables, Oscar. So, thank you so much.

And, you know, our next guest is somebody I've known for at least the last six years. And that is Adrian Rosado, and he has been part of our international Advisory Council as has Patty. But Adrian is now starting a Latino equity group for GlobalMindED. And his path, his culture, his background, has so formed his professional life. So, Adrian, we would love for you to come on and talk about your language assets.

But also, you know, for some of you who may have read about Adrian in our newsletter this week, he has such a rich cultural and family background that really has influenced his path professionally in his work life. So, Adrian, welcome, and we're delighted you're here. And thank you for sharing with us about your story and how language and culture has informed your past.

Adrian: Absolutely, absolutely. Thank you. Thank you. I do want to say thank you to everybody on the call so far. It's a pleasure to be here. And thank you, Carol, thank you Department of ED, thank you, English Language Acquisition, appreciate it. Oscar, very well spoken as well. So, to speak to Carol's point, I want to take some time out really quick and kind of divide my response into two parts. So, when I think of multilingualism, and I think of multiculturalism, they're two very different things. So, Carol mentioned in terms of my personal life kind of leading into my professional life. So, what I do professionally these days is, I have two very, very, extremely unique and important contracts with the government.

So, one contract is, and I'll do it in a very specific trajectory. So, one contract is in educational tourism. So, we started a company about four years ago called The Cultural Clarity Experience. And what we did with The Cultural Clarity Experience was, we were taking groups of first-generation students, mostly Latino backgrounds, and we were taking them abroad to Asia. So, China and the Philippines. And while that may seem like, you know, it's a cool study abroad experience, the rationale behind that was one very important aspect of what we're talking about today, the globalization of today's workforce. The reason we started a Cultural Clarity Experience was to provide students who were coming from underrepresented backgrounds, an opportunity to be put in other cultures outside of their own.

And as I mentioned before, a lot of them were coming from Latino backgrounds. So, they were very well versed in Spanish speaking. So, a lot of them, you know, the families, just speaking Spanish at home, and then they would speak English in university or at the university setting, you know what I'm saying? University setting. So, you know, what I saw was, there was a slight disconnect where we thought English and Spanish was kind of like this end-all, be-all in the United States of America. And as I saw the trajectory of the workforce going into this Uber globalization, I thought, you know, how can we give these students, just like Oscar, an opportunity to have a leg up in terms of being well-rounded multiculturally?

I think there's some stats that we presented earlier, and you may have sent out some stats, but Mandarin language is the most spoken language in the world. So how are we allowing and how are we providing opportunities for our students to have access to that in the United States of America? So, you know, when we were able to develop that program, that's really what was standing out to me, was allowing these students to have that opportunity to provide a platform, to make connections abroad, so that these Latino students, these African

American students, these students from minority backgrounds, they have connections to continents, to cultures that all other counterparts will not have. So, what does that do?

That gives them a ton of leverage when they go to apply for internships and jobs. And that's initially and ultimately, what we're developing over here. So that's the first part of kind of what drives me, what I'm passionate about, if you will, is providing, A, a level playing field, but, B, also utilizing our culture, our ability to be multicultural, and our multiculturalism to leverage that so that we have a level playing field when we're applying for internships and jobs. So that's the first part. The second part is, I also have a contract with the Department of Labor. So this is an interesting one. So, we have a contract to provide interns in the engineering and business field to the U.S Army, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Veterans Affairs Office.

So, here's the kicker, though, all these interns have to come from minority serving institutions. So HBCUs, Hispanic serving institutions, Asian-American Pacific Islander serving institutions, and tribal colleges. So, what does that mean? That means that when I'm picking these interns, and we have all these tons of students applying to this very unique and exclusive internship with these federal agencies, what is going to set them apart? What is going to allow me to say, you know what, I need student X, Y, Z, I need student B to be a part of this specific cohort? Well, what's going to set them apart is being multilingual. What's going to set them apart is the ability to be placed in over specific positions, which requires somebody to be able to speak Spanish and English, which requires somebody to understand Mandarin and English.

So, if I'm able to provide students an opportunity to advance their careers while they're in the university setting, multicultural and multilingualism goes a long, long way. So, as you could see, we've developed this pipeline where we're setting students up to understand the importance of multilingualism and multiculturalism that ultimately leads them into workforce development.

So, you know, when you ask me, Carol, the importance of a multicultural background...and coming from a multicultural background, you know, I look at myself being raised in a Puerto Rican household, speaking Spanish, my grandparents speaking Spanish, and I thought to myself, "How can I take advantage of that? And how can I learn from that? And how can I provide this to other people?" So, with that said, Thank you for the opportunity. And if you have any questions, I'm an open book.

Carol: And, you know, what I always love about Adrian is he always can frame whatever is happening in the most extraordinarily positive way. And that's a skill right now that every single student and all of us working, you know, in our different capacities, we have to have that skill right now, because we're doing a lot of things for the first time. We're doing a lot of things. We're figuring things out with a lot of ambiguity. And I think that, Adrian, you have so many awesome qualities, but that's just really one of the ones that I admire the most. So, thank you for doing that and for your insights.

Adrian: Thank you.

Carol: And now, we have Dr. Patty Lopez, who is extraordinary, and I've known Patty for six or seven years. She's been in our international Advisory Council, has spoken like every year

at our annual conference, and then she's contributed digitally this year. And Patty, you have such a rich and wonderful background.

And we did a story on Patty yesterday. And she was featured also in one of the brawny ads so that we didn't have that gender stereotype of just some big lumberjack looking guy on the paper towels. And so, Patty has so many different gears. But Patty, welcome, and we would love to hear from you firsthand about language and culture and your professional path as well as your personal path and what you're most passionate about right now that that has led to you in this moment in time.

Dr. Lopez: Thank you for the wonderful introduction, Carol. What I wanted to do is share a little bit about my experiences growing up in this small town of Northern New Mexico, town of Espanola, which many of you might not be aware is 20 minutes from Los Alamos, New Mexico, the home of the hydrogen bomb, and which has one of the highest per capita incomes in all of the United States. So, you take this small town of mostly farmers, you know, they grow fruits and vegetables, livestock is too, farming. And you contrast it with this very highly educated workforce that was literally up on the cliff side and isolated by virtue of what they were working on. And you find a stark contrast in haves and have nots.

And I felt it growing up through the school system, when we played them in sports, they always had the better equipment, they had the better coaches, the better facilities. And then, you know, just my own experience of language in my household where my parents were native Spanish speakers, and all the generations before them were fluent in Spanish. And my parents were bilingual, they learned Spanish first then English. And then my experience with my six siblings, four brothers and two sisters, was really to be raised with English first.

And, you know, were supposed to pick up Spanish, but it turns out that Spanish was the language of business in my house where my mom and dad could talk about things that were... sorry, excuse me... things that were, you know, going on with the family and in work. And so, when my parents were raised, there was sort of a stigma against speaking Spanish because it sort of put you at a disadvantage. In their education, their teachers were nuns, Catholic nuns who spoke English and were afraid that some of the things that children were saying in Spanish were negative or derogatory. And so, they were told to speak English in the classroom.

And then there was also stigma as, you know, you tried to compete for jobs and employment with more highly educated people. And the perception was that we were uneducated. So, there was a high emphasis on speaking English very well. And so, what that meant for me was, we missed out on that really, that passion for holding on to our native language, and for me, was the connection to my ancestors. My grandmothers had passed before I was born, but I had great aunts and uncles who all spoke Spanish. And we missed out on the stories, their adventures, the challenges, their experiences, we lost that on being able to connect, even though most of what we did, instead of going on vacations, we went to visit family.

And so, you lost that special connection with your culture, and some of the learnings of those elders. And so, for me, as I went through my educational journey, I was very fortunate that the teachers in my community were very strong in math and science. And that became my superpower, my skill, my area of expertise as I went to a public university, a Hispanic serving institution, the Mexico State University. And I, you know, won a scholarship, I

worked the whole four years of my undergrad. I was fortunate to have taken a computer math course in high school, which virtually no one else in the whole country had done.

So, I've been literally programming for over 40 years. And, you know, the advantages that it gave me to be strong in math and science, to go into a technical career, like computer science, it gave me a, you know, very strong foundation to grow in my career where I had no role models, who must have the expectations in that era, where you were a nurse or a schoolteacher, or you were a stay at home parent. And so not having people who could mentor me, help guide me, I basically learned all of these things, you know, on my own.

And so, Carol knows this one of the passions that I have around education, around that first-generation experience of the need for mentorship, for scholarship, for leaders who show the way and share their experiences. And so, as I then went through my academic career, I decided to pursue an advanced degree, which has given me a lot more opportunities in terms of being highly specialized in my skill set. And then the ability to do research gave me the opportunity to see the world, as Adrian talked about, and to be able to go experience other cultures to see, you know, the U.S and my home country from a different lens helped grow my own perspective from an international point of view.

And as I worked in two international companies like Hewlett Packard, and Intel Corporation now, you know, I work with people in my day job from all over the world. I have partners in Taiwan, in Shanghai and Beijing. I have partners in Guadalajara, Mexico, in the U.S, in California, Oregon, here in Colorado, as well as in Austin, Texas, and Chandler, Arizona. But, you know, all of those rich experiences have shaped me and broadened my perspective and respect for multilingual speakers and multicultural perspectives.

So, for me personally, one of the big challenges is, you know, if you look back at the history of the State of New Mexico, many of you may not be aware, but the oldest capital in the United States is actually Santa Fe, New Mexico, which was established in 1610. And the region that is New Mexico that Southwest was colonized, before the pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower. So, a lot of our history, our U.S history is really an Anglo-Saxon view of the world and not so much the Native American Experience, the Hispanic or Latin X experience, the Japanese or Chinese, or, you know, the immigrant experiences.

And so, as we are now a mix of cultures and races, ideologies, as well as language, it's very important to have that respect for what every person brings to the table, regardless of, you know, what the color of their skin is, or how they speak. We have to listen with an inclusive mindset and an appreciation for the richness that they bring to any of our conversations. So, you know, to sum it up, I would really like to share that, in agreement with both Oscar and Adrian is that language is an asset for business and socio-economic advancement.

When you work in a global corporation, like Intel, with large research and development centers across the world, being able to build strong relationships with colleagues, understand their perspectives, to appreciate what they bring to their communities, to their customers in other parts of the world, how they can share their knowledge with me and help me grow, and how I can do the same for them, you know, really just makes us that much closer and, you know, we have this phrase at Intel, "We're one Intel," "Somos Intel." And so that is the richness that I carry with me in my daily work and in my work in the community. Thanks.

Carol: Thank you, Patty. And I will say too that what characterizes Patty and Adrian and Oscar and Jeffrey and Feli we're going to hear from in just a minute, is that beyond your own family, beyond your own work, you are such a strong, generous leaders. And I have just seen, you know, Patty and Adrian, especially mentor so many different students the last few years who are students like Oscar, who may not see themselves in their faculty at college, but they see themselves in these role models. And so I just want to, you know, thank you all again for making the time to really give back and to, you know, see over the arc of time, the cultural and other kinds of benefits that you've been able to have that now you're creating for others. So, thank you so much, Patty.

And now we're going to hear from Philly. Philly, are you there? Philly Sola Carter, and she is somebody who has broken a lot of different glass ceilings. And she's going to tell a little bit about how that happened a little bit as a young girl, and then over the arc of time. And now she is doing a lot of board leadership and other kinds of things she'll share with us as well. So, Philly, welcome, and thank you so much for being part of our panel today.

Feli: Thank you. It is an honor and a privilege to be invited in to be here with Oscar and Patty and Adrian and others, and Jeff and then all our friends. Amazing group. So, thank you for that. A little bit about my story, the accent you will hear is from Puerto Rico. I grew up in Caguas Puerto Rico, the English comes from my early education, thanks to the school systems in Notre Dame, in my hometown, and subsequently my college career, College of Monson Vincent in Riverdale.

And when I graduated, many years ago, I knew that I wanted to do something in public service. By way of background in my family, growing up, service is a key element. So, the phrase that was drilled into me was "Ser servicial," "Be of service." That is not a negotiable point, whatever you do, be of service. And it advises me to this day. That's what I do. And so, when I graduated from college, the thought was to stay in New York City, and I was offered a position with the Social Security Administration. My parents thought I was just wonderful in an honorable profession, in federal public service.

And there are so many opportunities, so many, in federal service that I want you to be thinking about that, because there are countless of opportunities. At the time that I started indirect service at the Washington Heights office in New York City, I was one of a handful of Spanish speaking bilingual interviewers. And we had a disproportionate number of folks who needed to be seen that spoke English. Now, I believe that all of you who are gainfully employed, in your paychecks, when you collect your paycheck and look at what was taken out, and this is a thing called FICA, that's a Federal Insurance Contributions Act that covers your Social Security.

And when I landed there, I realized that a number of the folks that were coming in to file for the benefits they were entitled to...it's an insurance program, you're paying to it...because they were disabled, because their spouses have perished, and they had come for survivors benefits because they were retiring and they were not able to access their benefits and to access the service because in those days, we have to do it all face to face, and if you didn't speak English, you're out of luck. So, for those of us who spoke Spanish, we ended up taking on a disproportionate number of the public that was coming in, but there was just no way that we're going to let them happen.

Simply out of efficiency, because I had so many, I started to do group interviews for people who were filing for disability. Most of them who were filing were in the similar wage categories, that type of work, there was only one Spanish speaking clinician [SP] in the area. So, they all went to him. And in those days, we were not into privacy, we really didn't have all the computers we have now. And so, with group, these folks are on my desk and do mass production with them and then do individual things. My manager saw that and assumed that I like to do public speaking. I was terrified of public speaking, I really was.

But again, "Be of Service," there was a local channel cable TV show, where they needed somebody who spoke Spanish to talk about the program benefits. And the person who was positioned to do that, who was much more senior than I was at the time, didn't speak Spanish. So, it was me, I was in the sit [SP]. And so that was a crash course in appearing on a TV program way back when. So, it was the first of many opportunities that others I have worked with...and you will encounter folks like this, who say, "You're not getting paid that much. It's not your job. It's extra work. It's late at night." Fill in the blanks, right? My perspective is, it's a fabulous opportunity to learn something new.

It's interesting, it's fun. And back to the core "ser servicial," be of service, all right? Because what I'm doing is conveying that message and helping others, ultimately. And you will find that that was the pattern that I established early on and continuing all the way through. I ended up having about a dozen different positions for the agency moving up the lines fairly quickly into managerial positions. Many of the jobs that I chose to take in, in fact, nearly every one of the positions that I took in direct service, were locations that other people didn't want to go to. I was surprised by [inaudible 00:36:40] and the Bronx, known as Fort Apache at the time. There was a movie made about that shortly before I arrived there.

And other locations that were not considered exciting or interesting, but they were where the need was the greatest. And having that determination to do the best for those who have the least, made all the difference. I have the most phenomenally dedicated staffs, most are bilingual, bicultural. We really, really were able to make a difference. And as you start to make a difference, people start to notice you know their ways. So because I was the first female Hispanic manager of an office in the Bronx, I got tapped be part of a regional group, I got tapped to become involved in recruitment of personnel, which would eventually lead to my being one of the leaders in an agency wide strategy to improve representation and diversity from a business perspective.

We love EEO but this was from the business scapes. Why it matters, right? Why you can formulate your budget better if you know who you're serving? Why you can be more efficient, where you can prevent fraud? Never mind doing the right thing in servicing folks. So that was the beginning of the trend. Later on, the agency was very good to me, I got selected to teach a training class where I happened to meet my spouse, my husband. And as a matter of fact, today we're celebrating our anniversary. I won't tell you about the year. But it's been a long time and wonderful, wonderful life.

So, the agency has been great, public service has been wonderful. But eventually, we went to regional office positions and national position. So, I landed in the office of the Commissioner of Social Security, the very top, working for the number one career person under the political appointed Commissioner. And, again, language was a miracle because the agency, soon after I got there, was being sued for not providing the right services.

There was a fraud situation on the West Coast involving inappropriate use of middlemen to assist beneficiaries because we didn't have the right staffing and congressional hearings. And because I'd had that experience, and I could understand what the issues were, I was the person to be critical in that moment and to help others figure out how to get things done and what they needed to do. And to articulate that case as to why it's in your best interest to make sure that your staff is fully bicultural and bilingual and able to help and how that helps you succeed. And [inaudible 00:39:19] for our budget when we go to Congress to ask for whatever plans it is or IT technology, etc.

So, from there, I moved on to become a senior executive. I was the first Puerto Rican woman to be a senior executive at the Social Security Administration. I loved the officer training, because all the things that I had done had also bought me in a role of mentor and coach within [inaudible 00:39:45], but mentorship of countless people. And it was determined that I was the right person for that position at a time when the agency really needed to expand that group. So, I became the head of all the leadership programs for the agency, and eventually moved up to be the number two person in human resources, the Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer. We had a different title, but that's the concept.

And fortunate enough to be one of the few ACSs in Puerto Rico to have received not one but two presidential rank awards. And those are the highest awards that a federal career executive can receive. So, that meant the world, and to be able to have my family with me when we attended those events, and so on. All because of an orientation to surface for more critically because of the bilingual bicultural aspects of that. Moving beyond that to where I am now, after a while, we relocated to Maryland, when we got this position. And both my husband and I had wonderful, successful careers here. And I became involved with Hispanic students in the school system.

A peer who knew me had suggested that I help out with something with the school system where they had an issue. That led to my...in a couple of years becoming the head of a local nonprofit, all volunteers, focus on experience where we advocated for access to academic success for a Hispanic student. That led to the creation of Hispanic achievement specialist's decision in our school system that has won awards and is a model that is in place in numerous schools. And that led me to approach the community college in our county at the time, as the head of this organization to ask, what might they be doing for Hispanic students? I did not know at the time.

But a few years later, after I'd left the agency, and I had stepped down from my leadership [inaudible 00:41:43] that I had the privilege of being appointed to the Board of Trustees of the community college where I'm now the chair of the board. And not only that, but that the seed that was planted because this community college... and I'm so happy, Oscar, to hear your story about the community college, I love community colleges, the best deal in town. It really is. At this community college, we pride ourselves in doing things right, for the right reasons and in the right way.

And so, when I had mentioned the interest in paying particular attention to the Hispanic population, which is the rapidly growing percentage of our students, they took their time, but they did it right. And we now have a program called [foreign language 00:42:31] which is a finalist for best practice with the excellence in education nonprofit, which recognizes programs nationally, this just happened this year. So, it opens doors, it helps you, it helps

others. My bottom line with being bilingual and being in service is that it's a force multiplier. It's a force multiplier, because it means how you bring that added value, you can put it to use.

I believe in public service, we are not in it for our net worth, we are in it for our self-worth. And we derive our sense of self-worth from what we do for others. And if you're familiar with the concept of servant leadership, this is the ultimate case for servant leadership. Because you can serve the public and the country and others. And right now, there are many opportunities for you. When I checked a couple of weeks ago, there were 27 openings on usajobs.com, which is how you apply for a job for folks with bilingual skillset.

This morning, there were five I had not seen before. Small Business Administration public affairs in Atlanta, they need somebody who speaks Spanish. The VA needs a pharmacy technician who speaks other languages. Epidemiologists [foreign language 00:44:02] we have a pandemic, who can speak other languages. And then I cut this out from "The Wall Street Journal" the other day, I don't know if you can see it necessarily, but on Sunday's Wall Street Journal has a print ad, "Admission like no other," for the CIA.

And I'm looking at their qualifications and competitive candidates, among other things will have, foreign language skills, which they will use for their peers of the Department of State where they believe their mission is people-to-people engagement, people-to-people communications. And when you learn the language, you learn not only the words, but you learn the culture, you learn a great deal of insight as to how people connect with each other and that can do nothing but open doors for you, for what you care about, and for others in your life and in your community. Thank you.

Carol: Thank you so much, Feli. And one of the things I want to acknowledge about what you said, is that you were willing to go into positions that other people didn't see the opportunity. And I'll never forget, when I was living in New York City, and I was working in Englewood Cliffs, and I was volunteer teaching ESL to a lot of immigrants at the time in Midtown, I lived on the Upper West Side. And I remember thinking, "I don't really exactly know what I'm doing in Espanyol, 'esta bien,' 'esta buenisimo.'" And I just thought, "Don't worry about it. This is a need, and you can be of service and this will be so helpful."

And I feel like one of the big reasons I got promoted as a manager was because I had that opportunity to teach ESL to those students. And I think this is a time right now when people can look for those jobs that other people can't see the potential in, but they're the jobs that actually really catapult your career to the furthest places, that's where you learn what you're capable of. And I think, you know, these multiple pandemics are putting us in a situation like that. So, I just want to acknowledge, you have had such an amazing arc of career.

And it's nowhere near over yet, but just your contributions that I just love that you can look at different things and say, "I see opportunities in these places that other people aren't willing to go." And I think if there are young people here listening today or other students, or people working with young people, I would just really encourage that type of philosophy because I think that's where the amazing opportunities come out of those kinds of situations. I think with that, we just want to thank Lorena and OELA, her whole team, Supreet and Jen and her team, and then the incredible panelists who are here today.

Host: Thank you to our moderator and all the panelists for a great discussion. The information, examples, and recommendations that you shared with us today will certainly

help multilingual and multicultural learners in their education and career trajectories. As this podcast comes to a close, I encourage all of you to visit the NCELA website at www.ncela.ed.gov and check out the many resources available there.